203 Transportation of messages, until the recent installment of telegraph, was by messenger, and still is to a considerable extent. In the past, the king or governor would send an official messenger, ("melekt sätta") with the message wedged tightly in a cleft stick carried above the head while running, which assured safety to the runner.

Proclamation of decrees was and sometimes still is drummed out at the public market place, and only in the capital are public radio loudspeakers utilized. These decrees are heard in respectful silence, though unpopular decrees might, among Amhara, be followed by a delayed "murmuring", which, in the past, often led to local rebellions. Spies [208] of the government listen on such occasions to learn public opinion (astäyayät") in time.

211 Landmarks "for memory" are encountered frequently, and they partly take the place of inscribed monuments of cultures of greater literacy. Commemorative monuments in the countryside, called "mäsaläniya", take the form of conical piles of rocks, to which passersby add small rocks, so that one grows sometimes until no one remembers what the original event was. It may have been a battle, or the resting place of a saint. There are no name inscriptions, this being sometimes purposely avoided to prevent an evil spirit such as buda from fastening onto the name and doing harm.

212 To insure precision of communication in matters of culture focus, e.g. in religious communication, a combination of pictures and written words is used. This has developed the ancient comic-strip-type of illustration of religious scenes, mainly biblical, hagiological, and Abyssinian-National, found in canvas paintings on the walls of churches. The words spoken by the character are written into the empty space near the mouth. The scenery is starkly realistic. The style shows fierce concentration on the event depicted, without irrelevent background scenery; naivete, but body positions shown with realistic gusto.